

Some names of American Cervidae.

The moose of northeastern North America was called *Cervus americanus* by Dewitt Clinton in 1822 (Letters on Nat. Hist. and Int. Resources of N. Y. p. 193, 1822) thirteen years before the publication of *Alces americanus* by Jardine (Nat. Lib. XXI, 125, 1835). Therefore the authority for the name *americanus* should be Clinton instead of Jardine as usually quoted. The name as proposed by Clinton first appeared in 1820 in one of a series of newspaper articles published under the nom de plume 'Hibernicus'. These letters subsequently appeared in book form in 1822. The name is unequivocally given and is accompanied by a diagnosis in which the moose is distinguished from the wapiti or elk. A mounted specimen seen in a museum at Albany, N. Y., is mentioned, which if still existing, could be considered the type of the species.

If the name *Cervus dama americana* Erxleben 1777, be recognizable, which I do not admit, it of course preoccupies the *Cervus americanus* of Clinton, in which case *Alces muswa* Richardson 1852 would stand for the moose. Thus the exceedingly doubtful grounds upon which some authors have recently attempted to overthrow the current name of the Virginia deer, might also serve to displace the name of the moose and we should have not one, but two of our most important animals bereft of their well-known names, to say nothing of the establishment of an uncertain precedent. The availability of Erxleben's interrogative, adjectival '*americanus*' is admittedly and unquestionably incapable of absolute demonstration and if it were simply ignored as a name, fixity of nomenclature would be subserved and no rule violated. In fact this would be quite in the spirit of canon XLV of the A. O. U. Code, which reads: "Absolute identification is requisite in order to displace a modern current name by an older obscure one"; that is, a current name is not to be overthrown except upon *absolutely convincing* evidence. If conservatism is ever to prevail it must be in such a case as this, in which it is hard to conceive conditions under which the principle of giving an established name the benefit of doubt would be more clearly justified.

Another well known name of an American deer, *Cervus mexicanus*, has been threatened recently and a new name proposed to replace it on the ground that its original basis was faulty (Allen, Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist. XVI, 20, 1902). Gmelin, who was strictly a compiler, proposed *Cervus mexicanus* chiefly on the basis of Pennant's Mexican Deer (Hist. Quad. I, 110, pl. fig. 3, 1781). Pennant, however, was not altogether a compiler, and although the first citation under his Mexican deer is the unidentifiable Teuthlalmaçame of Hernandez, it is evident that this is not the basis of the name, for the description which follows and the accompanying figure do not at all agree with Hernandez. This was well understood by early authors. Desmarest says: "Cette espèce, qui n'est encore connue que par ses bois extrêmement rugueux . . ." (Mamm. II, 444, 1822); and Ham. Smith says: "This species not as yet figured, was first noticed by Mr. Pennant, who represented the horns from a

pair in the Museum of the Royal Society and now in the British, to which the ticket of Mexican was attached. With this information he inferred it to belong to Hernandez's *Teutla Macame* . . ." (Griff. Cuv., IV, 130, 1827). That this was really the case there can be no doubt, for Hernandez's description is evidently composite, and is accompanied by a figure of an anomalous goat-like deer-antelope not referable to any known species, while Pennant's description applies in every particular to a deer and in nowise to an antelope, and is accompanied by a good figure of antlers which are at least those of a deer, and if abnormal, of the same sort of abnormality that frequently occurs in several forms of American deer. Antlers of this kind have been repeatedly figured (See Baird, Mamm. N. Am. p. 652, 1857; Baillie-Grohman, Sport & Life in W. Am. & B. C., p. 136, 1900; Recreation, XII, 348, 1900), and Mr. E. W. Nelson informs me that he has seen similar ones in Mexico. The horns figured by Pennant are perhaps still in the British Museum as Gray mentioned them as late as 1872 (Cat. Rum. Mamm. B. M. p. 83, 1872). That they were really horns of some form of American whitetail deer is shown by the characteristic subbasal snags and forward curving beams, in essential agreement with the horns figured by Baird (loc. cit.). Moreover, J. E. Gray, and others who have made reference to them, have unhesitatingly referred them to one or another of the whitetail group. The exact locality from which these horns came may be indeterminate, but even if this be so, the restriction of the name *mexicanus* by Lichtenstein (Darst. pl. XVIII and text, 1827-34) and the usage of subsequent authors gives abundant authority for its application to the deer of the Valley of Mexico. Surely a well known, current name, based, at least in part, upon an identifiable specimen, should not be displaced unless there is to be a general rejection of all names not based upon absolutely flawless descriptions and figures.—*Wilfred H. Osgood.*

The type locality of *Ametrida minor* H. Allen.

In the Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History (Vol. 26, p. 240-246, May, 1894), under the title, "On a New Species of *Ametrida*," Dr. Harrison Allen described a new bat, giving it the name *Ametrida minor*. He states, on page 241, "Locality unknown. Type, a male, mature individual in alcohol. . . Museum of the Boston Society of Natural History". This type specimen is still carefully preserved at the Society's museum, and at the time of its description was without label of name or locality. Thinking that it might be possible to obtain some clue as to the history of the specimen, I recently examined it, but, at first, found no data with it whatsoever, beyond a recent label giving its name and place of description. While putting the specimen away, however, a small bit of paper, rendered almost transparent through long immersion in the alcohol, was discovered in the bottom of the bottle, and on examination, it was found to bear on one side the number